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GPO RELEASES KIDS' GUIDE TO ONLINE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

Ben Franklin Provides Guided Tour of the Federal Government Using Information Resources Available Through GPO Access

The Government Printing Office (GPO) has released an exciting new website for students, parents, and teachers. This powerful resource, called ***Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids***, at <http://bensguide.gpo.gov>, provides a fun and educational introduction to how the U.S. Government works based on information resources available through ***GPO Access***, GPO's acclaimed Internet site, at www.access.gpo.gov.

With Benjamin Franklin as a guide, the kids' pages cover topics such as the U.S. Constitution, how Federal laws are made, the branches of the Federal Government, and what it means to be a U.S. citizen. ***Ben's Guide*** also includes games and links to other U.S. Government websites created for kids.

A service of GPO's Superintendent of Documents, ***Ben's Guide*** offers instruction in the use of the primary source materials on ***GPO Access***. It includes resources tailored to four specific age groups, plus a special set for parents and educators.

Franklin was chosen as the tour guide through this site because he once held the title of "public printer"—the Government's printer—for several of the American colonies. He also helped organize one of the first libraries in America.

According to the current Public Printer of the United States, Michael F. DiMario, "Students in this Nation could benefit from greater understanding of how their Federal Government works. With Benjamin Franklin's 294th birthday coming up on January 17,

2000, we're making **Ben's Guide** available to help students understand and appreciate the link between their Government and the information it produces."

Ben's Guide complements the efforts of Federal departments and agencies in the executive branch to expand access to Internet-based educational resources for children, teachers, and parents, following a directive from President Clinton dated April 18, 1997.

Since its release, **Ben's Guide** has been received positively by the library community. A prototype of **Ben's Guide** was critiqued at the American Association of School Librarians conference in November 1999, where it received excellent reviews. The Newsletter of the Documents Interest Group of Oregon (December 1999) described **Ben's Guide** as a "well-designed children's web site" that "could be useful for reference questions as well," and characterized it as having "an attention to detail and to readability that is exemplary in web design."

GPO Access is one of the few Government websites established by law and one of the longest running, beginning operation in 1994. It is virtually the only Government website that provides easy, one-stop, no-fee access to information from all three branches of the Federal Government. Approximately 80 applications make information available from more than 1,300 databases, representing more than 104,000 individual titles. **GPO Access** also provides links to an additional 62,000 titles on other Federal websites. Monthly document retrievals today average more than 21 million, with a total of more than 228 million retrievals in FY 1999 alone.

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